

But the whirling clouds made me dizzy. I felt a burning sensation below my left rib. I drew in a deep breath of cold air, and a knife seemed to drive right through my chest. I tucked my chin down again. My cap seemed to squeeze my head like a vice. I took it off and placed it on the point of my saddle. I felt ill. It was foolish of me to have started. Everybody would be asleep at Pocovnicu Iordache. They would not have expected me. They would not have imagined that I should be silly enough to start in such weather. I urged on my horse which staggered as though it, too, had been drinking.

The wind had sunk, the rain had ceased. It was misty; it began to grow dark and to drizzle. I put my cap on again. Suddenly the blood began to beat against my temples. The horse was quite done, exhausted by the violence of the wind. I dug my heels into him, I gave him a cut with my whip; the animal took a few hasty paces, then snorted, and stood still on the spot as though he had seen some unexpected obstacle in front of him. I looked. I really saw, a few paces in front of the horse, a tiny creature jumping and skipping. An animal! What could it be? A wild beast? It was a very small one. I put my hand to my revolver; then I clearly heard the bleat of a kid.

I urged on the horse as much as I could. It turned straight round and started to go back. A few paces forward, and again it stood snorting. The kid again! The horse stopped; it turned round. I gave it some cuts with the whip and tightened the curb. It moved forward--a few paces--the kid again!

The clouds had dispersed. One could see now as clearly as possible. It was a little black kid. Now it trotted forward, now it turned back, it flung out its hooves, and finally reared itself on to its hind legs and ran about with its little beard in front, and its head ready to butt, making wonderful bounds and playing every kind of wild antic.

I got off my horse, which would not advance for the world, and took the reins up short. I bent down to the ground.

"Come, come!" I called the kid, with my hand as though I wanted to give it some bran.

The kid approached, jumping continually. The horse snorted madly, it tried to break away. I went down on my knees, but I held the horse firmly. The kid came close up to my hand. It was a dear little black buck which allowed itself to be petted and lifted up. I put it in the bag on the right side among some clothes. At that moment the horse was convulsed and shook in every limb as though in its death throes.

I remounted. The horse started off like a mad thing. For some time it went like the wind over ditches, over mole-hills, over bushes, without my being able to stop it, without my knowing where I was, or being able to guess where it was taking me. During this wild chase, when at any moment I might have broken my neck, with body frozen and head on fire, I thought of the comfortable haven I had so stupidly left. Why? Mistress Marghioala would have given me her room, otherwise she would not have invited me.

The kid was moving in the bag, trying to make itself more comfortable. I looked towards it; with its intelligent little head stuck out of the bag it was peering wisely at me. The thought of another pair of eyes flashed through my mind. What a fool I'd been.

The horse stumbled; I stopped him forcibly; he tried to move on again, but sank to his knees. Suddenly, through an opening in the clouds, appeared the waning moon, shining on the side of a slope. The sight of it struck me all of a heap. It was in front of me! There were then two moons in the sky! I was going uphill; the moon ought to be behind me! I turned my head quickly to see the real moon. I had missed my way--I was going downhill! Where was I? I looked ahead--a maize-field with uncut stalks; behind me lay open field. I crossed myself, and pressing my horse with my weary legs, I tried to help him rise. Just then I felt a violent blow on my right foot. A cry! I